



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Community Interviews Conducted on Lead Site

Jacobsville Neighborhood Soil Contamination Site

Evansville, Indiana

September 2005

For more information

To learn more about the Jacobsville Neighborhood Soil Contamination situation, you may contact these EPA team members:

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EPA Region 5
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Document library

The community involvement plan and other official site documents can be reviewed at:

Evansville Vanderburgh Public
Library
Central Branch-Public Comment
Shelf
200 S.E. Martin Luther King Jr.
Blvd.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency interviewed more than 20 local residents, community activists and public officials this summer to learn about community concerns and issues regarding the Jacobsville Neighborhood Soil Contamination site in Evansville. The interviews consisted of randomly selected residents in the Jacobsville neighborhood where lead contamination has been detected in some yards. Representatives from the Jacobsville Neighborhood Association and Jacobsville Area Community Corp. were also interviewed. EPA asked questions about the lead contamination, cleanup and community involvement process in the former industrial area on the city's north side.

Based on the information collected during the interviews, EPA created a document called a "community involvement plan," which specifies the outreach activities that EPA will use to inform the public and address community concerns. The plan will be used by the EPA community involvement coordinator, who is the link between Agency technical staff and the public. The community involvement plan is available for review at the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library (*see the box to the left*).

Most of the residents interviewed live in the vicinity of the Jacobsville site, but did not have much knowledge of the lead contamination or cleanup. Many people did not realize their neighborhood was called "Jacobsville." Community activists and public officials EPA spoke with were more familiar with the site. Both residents and officials were mainly concerned about possible health risks and property values.

History

The Jacobsville Neighborhood Soil Contamination site consists of 250 acres or 45 city blocks located north of the Lloyd Expressway between Main Street and Fulton Avenue (*see site map on page 2*). About 500 people live in the affected area, which has high levels of lead in the soil. The boundaries of the site could change as EPA continues to do more testing and sampling.

In 1990 EPA conducted an emergency cleanup at the Evansville Plating Works, an abandoned electroplating and metal refinishing facility. After the cleanup and area inspection, it was concluded based on samples collected that no further action was needed. But lead contamination in the Jacobsville neighborhood was discovered in 2000 during soil testing in yards. Analysis of the samples showed some lead "hot spots," with levels as high as 6,150 parts per million. The acceptable health limit is 400 parts per million. One part per million is similar to four drops of ink in a 55-gallon barrel of water.

of Jacobsville, but had not realized it was their neighborhood. Many people knew the neighborhood as “Westside,” “Jimtown,” “Midtown,” or “Willardsville.”

Local officials and members of the Jacobsville Neighborhood Association and an economic development organization known as Jacobsville Area Community Corp. who spoke with EPA were aware of lead contamination at the Jacobsville site. Here are the interview questions and summary of the answers:

What are your concerns about the contamination at the Jacobsville Neighborhood Soil Contamination site?

The concerns of residents and officials included health risks, property values, negative effects on economic development, keeping the public informed and effects on the environment including plants and animals in the area. It is important to residents that EPA does as much as possible as quickly as possible to reduce the effects of the lead.

How long have you been aware of the contamination or cleanup at the site?

Some residents became aware of contamination at the site when Evansville Plating Works was demolished. Others were not aware of the contamination until EPA contacted them to test their land or request this interview. Most of the officials with whom EPA spoke were aware of the site from the time the state became involved in the 1990s.

Are you aware of the site’s public involvement process? If yes, what are your perceptions of it?

Most of the residents and some officials were not familiar with EPA’s public involvement process under the Superfund program. Officials felt the process works if EPA has information to share. Some concern was expressed that information releases are vague and unhelpful because they do not answer questions about what effects if any the lead will have on human health and specific means to avoid contact.

Have you had contact with government officials about the site?

Most interview respondents have not contacted government officials about the site. Members of the Jacobsville Neighborhood Association and Jacobsville Area Community Corp. maintain regular contact with officials, particularly with the Evansville Department of Metropolitan Development. Some local officials had also contacted state and federal agencies about the site.

Do you feel that local, state and federal officials (including EPA) have been responsive to your concerns?

Members of the community organizations believe Evansville city officials have been responsive. They are also happy EPA has taken responsibility for the cleanup. Most people understood the cleanup would not be a quick procedure.

How frequently do you believe public meetings should be held in the community to discuss activities at the site?

Generally, residents and officials believe that meetings concerning the Jacobsville site should be held only when there is significant new information or progress to report. Several individuals suggested that meetings be combined with other initiatives in the area, including the monthly Star Neighborhood Project, the mayor’s meeting or Jacobsville Neighborhood Association meetings.

Do you have location preference(s) for the meetings?

Various local churches were recommended as meeting places by both residents and public officials. Local government buildings such as the library, CK Newsome Community Center and the Civic Center Complex were suggested as well. A hospital administrator also offered the Deaconess Hospital auditorium as a meeting place.

How do you feel about the way the site information is distributed?

Most respondents noted that there has been little information to provide up until now. Those who had received information received it from newspapers, television and neighborhood meetings.

Do you feel the site has received adequate coverage by the local/regional media?

About half of those questioned felt the site has received adequate coverage by the media.

What media do you rely on for information about the site?

Most residents get their information about the site from television. The most popular television stations are:

- ABC – WEHT Channel 25
- NBC – WFIE Channel 14
- FOX – WTVW Channel 7

Some residents also get information from the local newspapers. The most popular newspaper is the *Evansville Courier & Press*, but the *Our Times* newspaper was mentioned as well.

Those who get information from radio received it from:

- WIKY
- WGBF

- WEOA
- WKDQ

The Evansville environmental department offered the use of its Media Notification Network to assist EPA in distributing information.

Questions from local residents

Many questions were asked by residents and public officials during the EPA interviews. Responses to those questions that can be answered at this time are provided:

How long was the area contaminated? It is not known exactly how long the area has been contaminated, but the pollution may date back to before the 1900s.

Where did the contamination come from? Evansville Plating Works is not believed to be the cause of the lead problem in the Jacobsville neighborhood. Instead, EPA believes the contamination came from four older facilities in the neighborhood that had foundry and metal casting operations: Blount Plow Works, Advance Stove Works, Newton-Kelsay, and Sharpes Shot Works. EPA believes the day-to-day operations of these facilities released small lead particles into the air, which then settled in neighborhood soil where they remain today.

When is EPA going to do something? EPA has been sampling in and around the Jacobsville neighborhood to determine the extent and characteristics of the contamination. The next sampling event is scheduled for mid- to late-October. When sampling and testing is completed, officials can look at cleanup options, maybe in 2007.

Where is the lead, and what is being done to alleviate the problem? So far, EPA has only tested the top 6 inches of soil throughout the city of Evansville. Lead has been found in some of these samples. If the lead is actually from the four former plants as EPA believes, then it is likely the pollution will extend several feet deep. Sampling will better define the area of contamination. While that is being done, officials can start considering ways to clean up the lead and investigate health risks.

What does cleanup involve? Cleanup is either the removal, reduction or containment of the pollution so that health risks are reduced to acceptable levels. All soil in the highly industrialized United States contains pollution of some sort at various concentrations. The goal is to make sure contamination is not at a level that could harm people's health.

How is EPA going to take care of it, and when? EPA is planning to conduct more sampling to gather additional data in areas with higher lead concentrations and also sample deeper into the soil. Other sampling will begin soon to investigate possible health risks due to the lead contamination in the Jacobsville neighborhood. EPA will then compile data and cleanup options and present them to the residents, business owners and city personnel. A target date for picking a cleanup plan is spring 2007.

Could a stroke at age 32 and blood clotting problems be associated with the contamination? Cardiovascular effects have not been linked to lead exposure.

Are gardens safe? Some plants can take up lead from the soil so eating home-grown vegetables in the neighborhood is not recommended. Also, gardening can increase exposure to lead because disturbed soil is more easily inhaled and swallowed.

When the contamination is airborne, who has to do testing when there are no lead counts? When the cleanup of residential properties begins, each yard in the estimated path of contamination will be sampled to determine if the lead levels in the soil are high enough to need cleanup.

Will the entire city of Evansville be designated as a Superfund site? Not based on this contamination.

Are residents encouraged to relocate voluntarily? No. The lead levels are not so high that residents need to move. The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry has published a fact sheet with some precautions people can take to reduce their exposure around lead. This fact sheet can be found online at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts13.html. Also see the box on page 5, "*What you should know about lead,*" for more ideas on how to keep you and your family safe from lead exposure.

What's next?

Unfortunately, many details about the site and the cleanup are not yet known. Testing is being done, and EPA is starting the investigation into the extent of the contamination. When more results of the investigation are known, the information will be shared with the public through various means such as fact sheets like this one, letters, advertisements in local papers and public meetings.

What you should know about lead

What is lead?

Lead is a bluish-gray metal that is used in a wide range of products including batteries, ammunition, metal products (solder and pipes), and devices to shield X-rays. Due to health concerns, use of lead in products has been dramatically reduced in recent years.

How would the lead in my yard get into my body?

Lead can enter the body by inhaling air, drinking water, or swallowing food or dirt that contains lead. Nearly all of the lead that enters the body moves to the blood and is transported to other parts of the body. Small amounts of lead can also enter the body through the skin.

Regardless of how lead enters the body, it is usually stored in bone. Over time, the amount of lead in bones and teeth increases.

Why is lead dangerous?

Lead is harmful to people because it can cause high blood pressure, digestive problems, nerve disorders, memory and concentration problems, and muscle and joint pain. Exposure to lead is particularly dangerous for pregnant women as lead can cause premature birth, low birth weight or miscarriage.

Children are also at risk because they are more likely to swallow dirt that contains lead, and they are more

sensitive to the effects of lead. Lead exposure in children has been shown to decrease IQ scores, slow growth and cause hearing problems.

Although a connection between lead and cancer has not been shown in humans, laboratory animals exposed to lead have developed tumors, so lead is considered to be a possible cancer-causing substance.

How to keep your family safe

- Prevent your child from putting dirt in his or her mouth.
- If possible, cover exposed dirt with grass, flowers, mulch or concrete.
- Spray water on dusty areas in your yard.
- Do not let children play in dirt.
- Avoid eating outside.
- Wash hands often.
- Wash toys that have been outside.
- If you have a garden, avoid growing leafy or root vegetables such as lettuce or carrots.
- Do not dig in the garden on windy days.
- Wear gloves when gardening.
- Use a door mat and wipe your feet when entering the house.
- Practice good housekeeping.



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FIRST CLASS

JACOBSTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD SOIL CONTAMINATION SITE: Community Interviews Conducted on Lead Site

This fact sheet is printed on paper made of recycled fibers.

Mailing list additions

If you or someone you know would like to be added to the mailing list for the Jacobstown Neighborhood Soil Contamination site, fill out this form and mail it to the address below:

U.S. EPA Region 5
Office of Public Affairs (P-19J)
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

☐ If you would prefer to be removed from the mailing list, please mark this box.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

*Affiliation _____

*Phone (Daytime) _____ *(Evening) _____

*E-mail Address _____

Items marked with (*) are optional.

Once you are on the mailing list, you will automatically receive information from EPA regarding the Jacobstown Neighborhood Soil Contamination site.